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Travel Montana UPDATE

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1998 Statewide Tourism "Bed Tax" Collections Up 3%

Montana's 1998 tourism "bed tax" collections were up 3% statewide and some tourism regions and communities reported even greater growth, according to the latest report from the Montana Department of Revenue. In that report, statewide "bed tax" collections for 1998 rose to a record $10,042,971.

Glacier Country reported a 6% increase in 1998 collections. Custer Country was up 5%. Yellowstone Country matched the statewide 3% increase and Gold West Country was up 2%. Russell Country and Missouri River Country reported declines of 1% and 6% respectively. Despite the declines, 1998 was the second best collection year for Russell Country and 3rd best for Missouri River Country.

West Yellowstone led the nine reporting communities with 10% growth in its tourism "bed tax" collections. Missoula and Billings reported 5% collections' growth. Helena was up 4%, Butte increased 1% and Bozeman held even with their 1997 collections. Great Falls, Kalispell and Whitefish each reported 1% declines in collections.

And The Winners Are...

(Montana's 1999 Tourism Person and Community Of The Year Awards)

Governor Marc Racicot joined with the Montana Tourism Advisory Council in announcing and applauding the 1999 Montana Tourism Person and Community of the Year Awards at the March Governor's Conference in Helena. Here are the honored Montanans:

Tourism Person of the Year

Former Billings Mayor **Jim VanArsdale** was honored as Montana's Tourism Person of the Year. VanArsdale helped create the Pompeys Pillar Association which successfully campaigned for public ownership of this important Lewis & Clark site in southeast Montana. The association is currently leading the effort to build a first-class visitor center at the site in time for the upcoming Lewis & Clark bicentennial event. VanArsdale also represented Montana on the National Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Planning Council for five years.

Community of the Year

The community of **Broadus** was chosen as the Montana Tourism Community of the Year. The Powder River County residents were recognized for their countless volunteer hours spent attending tourism and recreation trade shows, developing a downtown beautification project, operating the Powder River Historical Museum, Mac's Museum, a visitor information center and sponsoring cattle drives to attract visitor's to southeastern Montana.

The Governor and Tourism Advisory Council also presented four tourism recognition awards. The honored individuals were:

Dr. Arnold "Arnie" Olsen, former State Parks Administrator and now chief of operations for Montana's Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department.

John "Jack" Lepley of Fort Benton was honored for his 40-year commitment to preserving, developing, and promoting Fort Benton's heritage projects.

Mary Tietjen, CEO of Great Falls' Wendt Advertising, was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award for her years of friendship and quality service to the Montana tourism industry.

Edythe McCleary, soon to retire Custer Country executive director, was honored with the Joan Gentri Award for her work on behalf of Montana's tourism regions and convention and visitor bureaus.

Congratulations to all the award recipients. Thanks for all you have done!!!

Legislature To Adjourn This Month

Montana's lawmakers are scheduled to adjourn the 1999 Session on April 24, although most observers feel the session will close before that date.

Travel Montana Director Matthew Cohn says the views and opinions of Montanans in the state's tourism industry are being heard. He thanks everyone who has taken time to share their views with legislators. "That's how our democracy works," says Cohn. For the latest update on Montana tourism's legislative issues, log on to Travel Montana's Intranet Site (travelmontana.state.mt.us) and Matthew's News From The Front reports.

Montana Film Office News:

The Montana Film Office was joined by a live grizzly bear cub in promoting Montana to over 3000 production professionals at the March LOCATIONS 99 trade show in Los Angeles. Montana - and the bear - were a hit. Thanks to all who provided film location brochures for the show.

The Montana-made, independent film, "Hi-Line," was an audience pleaser at this year's Sundance Film Festival in Utah. Shot in the Livingston/Clyde Park/Wilsall areas by Montana filmmakers and crew, the show also received applauds from critics and trade publications.

The film, "What Dreams May Come," earned an Oscar at the recent Academy Awards for its visual effects that used Montana's Glacier Park and Blackfeet Reservation as "heaven."

Montana Kids "Treasure Hunt" Promo Underway

One lucky kid and their family will win a free trip to Montana this summer just by answering six questions and the answers are available on the state's Montana Kids website. The Montana Kids "Treasure Hunt" contest was launched in March and will conclude May 31. It is designed to be "not only a chance for one lucky kid to win a great Montana vacation, but it also serves as an educational tool," says Travel Montana's Matthew Cohn. "The promotion will teach kids how to navigate through the Montana Kids website, while they learn important facts about the state."

The "Treasure Hunt" is being promoted nationally through banner ads on kid-oriented websites. The contest prize is a weeklong Montana adventure for four starting in Billings and ending in the Flathead Valley. Check out the contest, its many Montana sponsors and other details at the website: travelmontana.state.mt.us.

Montana Lewis & Clark Sign Plan Underway

Montana Tourism and Recreation Initiative (MTRI) partners have received a $20,000 National Park Service Grant to develop a statewide Lewis & Clark interpretive signage plan. The planning process began in February with an inventory of Montana's existing Lewis & Clark signs and historic markers.

The inventory will be followed by the development of a coordinated interpretation plan including recommended sign text, design and location along with suggestions for other Montana Lewis & Clark interpretation opportunities. MTRI is a partnership of 18 state and federal agencies, commissions and boards operating in Montana. For more information, contact MTRI Coordinator Sarah Lawlor, 444-9294.

1999/2000 Montana Winter Guide In The Works

The 1999/2000 edition of the Montana Winter Guide is underway. If you are involved in the state's winter recreation industry, take advantage of this guide's advertising and consumer information services. Directory listings cost $190; one third page listings $470; full page ads are also available on a first come, first served basis. Deadline for advertising is May 3, 1999. Contact Travel Montana's Susan Albrecht, 444-1617, for details.

Travel Montana Calendar

May

3	MTRI Director's Meeting, Helena
3	MTRI L&C Focus Team Meeting, Helena
10-14	Missouri River Country Media Tour

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